

Capitol Region Council of Governments

241 Main St., Hartford, CT 06106
Phone: (860) 522-2217 FAX: (860) 724-1274
Web Page: www.crcog.org

DATE: March 3, 2010
TO: Chairmen and Members of the Transportation Committee
FROM: Sandy Fry, Principal Transportation Planner
SUBJECT: Testimony in Support of Raised Bill No. 5386, An Act Concerning The Safety of Pedestrians and Cyclists and the Promotion of Healthy Communities

This testimony is submitted in support of Raised Bill 5386, An Act Concerning the Safety of Pedestrians and Cyclists and the Promotion of Healthy Communities.

Throughout the country, communities have discovered that bicycle and pedestrian facility investments can be important economic drivers. They improve community livability and property values and create attractions for visitors. In addition, active transportation is part of the solution to many of our society's problems: the obesity epidemic, traffic congestion, and air pollution. In fact, the state's climate change action plan is premised upon the assumption that more individuals can be encouraged to walk and bicycle for travel to work and other transportation needs.

In addition, the public wants bicycle and pedestrian specific facilities. A poll conducted in 2003 by the Gallup Organization for the National Highway Administration and the Bureau of Transportation statistics indicated that 73% desire such facilities.

Over the past 10 years, CRCOG has been aggressive in its efforts to make the region bicycle and pedestrian friendly. As part of this work we have quantified the transportation benefits of this effort: we estimate that a bicycle and pedestrian friendly region will eliminate 17 million miles of vehicle travel on an annual basis. Improvements in air quality, public health, and community livability will also result.

Right now our region and the state of Connecticut are unable to fully reap the benefits of active transportation. This is primarily due to the fact that we do not have safe facilities such as widened, striped shoulders or bike lanes for bicycling or walkable routes for pedestrians and funding to create such facilities is limited. This bill has the potential to correct these shortcomings.

This bill designates 10% of three funding programs - Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality, Highway Safety Improvement Program, and 402 Safety Funding - to be used to improve safety for bicyclists and pedestrians. Currently, bicyclists and pedestrian fatalities make up approximately 12.5% of all statewide traffic fatalities but total transportation funding on bicycle and pedestrian projects is less than 2%. Although this program will not bring bicycle and pedestrian funding to a parity level based upon fatalities, it will go a long way in supporting safety improvements. The creation of a competitive grant program for bike and pedestrian projects will enable the state to select the most worthy projects for implementation and will help to insure the development of a bicycle and pedestrian supportive state.

CRCOG is the regional planning organization that has served the City of Hartford and the 28 surrounding suburban and rural communities for more than 40 years.